

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KHARTO 01166 262101Z

62

ACTION SS-30

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O R 261930Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

TO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA NIACT IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL ASMARA

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C O N F I D E N T I A L KHARTOUM 1166

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, ET, SU

SUBJ: TENNECO FIVE

REF: KHARTOUM 1165

1. ON 26 MAY MR. WELDON GRAHAM MET ELF REP AT EXCELSIOR HOTEL KHARTOUM. AS PREARRANGED ELF REP WAS GIVEN HOTEL ROOM NUMBER OF MR. GRAHAM BY DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC SECURITY AND THE ENSUING REVEALING DISCUSSION BETWEEN MR. GRAHAM AND THE ELF REP LASTED ONE AND A HALF HOURS. THE ELF REP PROVED TO BE ARTICULATE, INTELLIGENT, PLEASANT, WELL DRESSED, SPOKE CONFIDENTLY AND GAVE IMPRESSION OF BEING BONAFIDE KNOWLEDGEABLE AND SIGNIFICANT ELF REPRESENTATIVE.

2. THE ELF REP GAVE HIS NAME AS ZEIN AND IDENTIFIED HIMSELF AS A MEMBER OF THE ELF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE. HE STATED HE OPERATED IN THE AREA NORTH OF KEREN AND GAVE FOLLOWING RESUME OF THE SITUATION CONCERNING THE CAPTURE OF THE TENNECO 5.

3. MOTIVATION FOR THE CAPTURE WAS BASED ON THE FACT THAT THE ELF HAD BEEN FOLLOWING THE AWARDING OF CONCESSIONS TO VARIOUS FOREIGN FIRMS IN ERITREA. HE ADDED THAT THE ELF WAS NOT AGAINST FOREIGN INVESTMENT IN ERITREA BUT FELT THAT THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT WAS EXPLOITING THE NATURAL RESOURCES OF THE AREA CLAIMED BY THE ELF.

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4. ZEIN THEN STATED THAT THE ELF WOULD LIKE TO SOLVE THE TENNECO SITUATION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL AUTHORIZED ZEIN TO GO TO KHARTOUM TO SEE IF COMMUNICATIONS COULD BE ESTABLISHED AND NEGOTIATIONS FOR RELEASE BE EXPEDITED.

5. ZEIN REPORTED THAT 2 DAYS AFTER THE CAPTURE THE COMMANDER OF THE UNIT HOLDING THE TENNECO PEOPLE SENT THE FOLLOWING DEMAND TO BE DELIVERED EITHER TO THE TENNECO OFFICIALS OR THE AMERICAN CONSULATE IN ASMARA:

- A. RANSOM OF 10 MILLION U.S. DOLLARS.
- B. RELEASE OF CERTAIN ELF POLITICAL PRISONERS HELD BY THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT.
- C. EXPOSE THE AGGRESSIVE POLICIES OF THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT AND PUBLICIZE THE ACTIVITIES OF THE ELF.
- D. CESSATION OF PATROLS BY ETHIOPIAN TROOPS IN THE AREA TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF CAPTIVES.

6. ZEIN STATED THE ABOVE DEMANDS WERE SENT BUT HE CANNOT SAY POSITIVELY IF THEY WERE RECEIVED AT THE OTHER END. HE THEN DESCRIBED HOW THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL DECIDED THAT THE ABOVE ORIGINAL DEMANDS WERE EXCESSIVE AND A LETTER WAS SENT TO THE COMMANDER OF THE CAPTURING UNIT ON APRIL 26 ORDERING THAT THE DEMANDS SHOULD BE CHANGED TO THE FOLLOWING:

- A. NO MILITARY ACTION AGAINST THE UNIT HOLDING THE MEN.
 - B. A PRESS ANNOUNCEMENT THAT THE TENNECO FIVE ARE DETAINED BY THE ELF WHICH IS A POLITICAL ORGANIZATION OPERATING SINCE 1961 TO OBTAIN NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE.
 - C. A CERTAIN NUMBER OF POLITICAL PRISONERS WOULD HAVE TO BE RELEASED. THE IDENTITIES AND NUMBERS TO BE NEGOTIATED.
 - D. RANSOM TO BE PAID BY TENNECO OF U.S. 2 MILLION DOLLARS.
- ZEIN ADDED HOWEVER THAT THE FINAL SUM IS ALSO SUBJECT TO NEGOTIATIONS.

7. ZEIN BELIEVES THAT IF THE DEMANDS ARE MET THEN A SETTLEMENT COULD BE EFFECTED IN 10 DAYS TO 2 WEEKS. HE ALSO STATED THAT HE COULD BRING WRITTEN PROOF FROM THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL WITHIN TWO DAYS AUTHORIZING HIM TO ACT AS A NEGOTIATOR.

8. IN ANSWER TO A QUESTION BY MR. GRAHAM AS TO THE BEST LOCATION FOR NEGOTIATIONS FROM THE ELF POINT OF VIEW, ZEIN ANSWERED KHARTOUM.

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9. MR. GRAHAM TOLD ZEIN THAT HE WAS REPRESENTING TENNECO AND NO GOVERNMENT WAS INVOLVED. HE ADDED THAT HE HAD TO CONVEY ZEIN'S INFORMATION TO HIS COMPANION'S SUPERIORS IN ADDIS AND THAT IT WOULD TAKE TWO DAYS TO GET AN ANSWER. ZEIN INDICATED THAT HE WOULD BE PERFECTLY WILLING TO WAIT UNTIL HE HEARD FROM MR. GRAHAM.

BREWER

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